

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com**ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 197 (2015) 715 – 721

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

7th World Conference on Educational Sciences, (WCES-2015), 05-07 February 2015, Novotel
Athens Convention Center, Athens, Greece

Interdisciplinary Use of Marketing Communication

Daniela Avramescu^a, Ioan Petroman^a, Elena Claudia Constantin^{b*}, Melania Varga^a

^a*Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine "King Michael I of Romania" from Timisoara, Faculty of Agricultural Management, 119 Calea Aradului, 300645, Timisoara, Romania*

^b*University Politehnica Timisoara, Faculty of Communication Sciences, Department of Communication and Foreign Languages, 2 Petre Ramneantu Street, 300596 Timisoara, Romania*

Abstract

The article focusses on the importance of the interdisciplinary use of the marketing communication to promote the European Union program for rural development 2014-2020. The launching of a new programme is not successful unless it attracts the target people's attention. A good communication as far as the Common Agricultural Policy is concerned might help the farmers in the Timis County better use the resources they have at their disposal, and eventually optimize the whole-farm system. The findings of the research made to identify the manner in which communication, on the European funding for the 2007-2013 period, was made pointed out that the methods used did not succeed to lower the lack of interest or improve the information level of the people living in the Timis County. They neither stimulated them to find out more about this matter nor increased the number of people who applied for European financing. The authors point out the importance of using interdisciplinary teams to inform the owners of semi-subsistence farms about various financing possibilities.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of Academic World Education and Research Center.

Keywords: hodings; semi-subsistence farms; European Union, Common Agricultural Policy; rural areas; communication; sources of information.

1. Introduction

Europe's rural areas are diverse as far as the following are concerned: population, demography, employability, traditions, etc. Some rural areas in Eastern Europe, even if they are members of the EU have to face a lot of challenges due to: lower levels of income, an unfavourable demographic situation, lower employment rates and

* Elena Claudia Constantin Tel.: +40 770 150 823
E-mail address: elclconst@gmail.com

higher unemployment rates, a slower development of the tertiary sector, weaknesses in skills and human capital, a lack of opportunities for women and young people (Rural Development policy 2007-2013, Employment in rural areas, European Commission; para. 6).

2. Overview of the farming system in Romania

The situation of the Romanian agriculture is rather different from the one of the other European Union member states. Even since 2007, when Romania joined the European Union, the percentage of the population involved in agriculture was the highest in the whole EU. The analysis made by Eurostat (2009, p. 1) for Romania took into consideration only the holdings of at least one European Size Unit (ESU). The findings indicate a 30% reduction in holdings of at least 1 ESU between 2005- 2007 and that these holdings employed 965 500 AWUs (annual work units) which is the equivalent of 965 500 people working full time. Among other things the statistics also indicated that out of 866 700 agricultural holdings only 54% made use of less than one AWU, while 9% made use of 2 or more AWUs; 19% used less than 2 ha, while 1.6% used 50 ha or more (p. 1). The percentage of the people who produced mainly for own consumption is extremely high, i.e. 64%, whereas only 35% produced mainly for direct sales.

Romania is considered a country with two agricultures: the semi-subsistence agriculture and the agro-industrial agriculture. According to statistics the subsistence agriculture is made up of: “2.6 million holdings with under 1 ha. In Romania the breaking between the semi-subsistence agriculture and the very large farms makes distribution of subventions the most inequitable in the whole European Union” (Luca, Ghinea, p. 22., our translation). The agro-industrial agriculture consists of 9600 house hold farms, which own over 100 hectares, and a few own even thousands of hectares; they are adapted to the market economy and are relatively competitive from a technical point of view. There is also a kind of medium type of agriculture, with 10-100 hectares, which is around 12% of the agricultural surface.

The paradox is that in Romania there is the highest population in the rural areas of the whole Europe and the highest number of non-viable farms from an economic point of view, and the highest number of farms not connected to the market economy. Experts consider that the social structure of the Romanian rural environment is to be blamed, as the semi subsistence agriculture hides in fact *lack of chances, hidden unemployment and poverty* (Luca, Ghinea, p. 23, our translation). The Romanian Agriculture is considered to have absorbed the economic shocks Romania received after 1990, when the communist regime fell, and it was the refuge for all the people affected by the new economic system. This segment increased with the wave formed by those affected by Romania joining the European Union in 2007. That period was characterised by a kind of forced deindustrialization and agriculture was a kind of retreat for many town people who found in it a way to survive.

In Romania the small-subsistence or part-commercial family farms are predominant and they are characterised by *a reduced number of animals and a less specialized production due to the small capacity shelters and precarious technical equipment* (Petroman, 2007, p. 15, our translation).

In the current day context, a chance for the Romania agriculture is represented by the Common Agricultural Policy which has the same policy irrespective of the size of the holding. It can be a viable opportunity for the Romanian rural development and implicitly for the agricultural development.

3. European Union program for rural development 2014-2020

The Romanians are given as a bad practice example, as far as accessing European funds are concerned. The new financing program for rural areas gives them a new opportunity. This programme is known as “second pillar” of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and continues the previous 7 years program, which ended in 2013.

It is focused on fostering the competitiveness of agriculture, on ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and on *a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment* (http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/index_en.htm)

Expecting that the provision regarding simplifying the rules and / or reducing the related administrative burden, we think that the Romanian farmers could benefit more from this program than from the previous one.

The Romanian environment is favorable to preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and to eco farming. We would like to make the farmers aware of the meaning of farm management to help the better use the resources they have at their disposal, and eventually to optimize the whole-farm system. But obviously, in order to benefit from the program you have to know about its existence and to fully understand it.

4. Interdisciplinary use of the marketing communication to promote the European Union program for rural development 2014-2020

In our current epoch and in the EU context, official communication is difficult because there are many senders and recipients, and both categories are different from various points of view: linguistic, cultural, ethic, political, etc. There is a complex process as far as communicating European Union affairs is concerned as it has to cope with a lot of obstacles, both at the community level and at the member states level as well.

In Romania, the absence of an integrated communication strategy made difficult the correct and complete understanding of the European policy. The lack of a good strategy led to a poor communication on EU in general, irrespective of the variety of the instruments used. The methods used did not succeed to lower the lack of interest of the people and improve the information level of the ordinary people.

As far as the agricultural sector is concerned, the persons in charge of the European programs and the ones in charge of taking decisions on this matter do not see the problem from the point of view of the common European farmers. The latter are confronting with “bureaucracy, incompetence, lack of information, maybe even lack of interest, lack of trust in the administrative system, etc.” (Constantin, 2014b, p.172, our translation) In our opinion we might get a realistic policy if their experiences are combined.

It is obvious that there is a need for interdisciplinary team in order to promote the new European financing program 2014-2020.

- *Why there is a need for marketing communication?*

The simplest definition of the concept of marketing communication, gives us a general idea about the activities involved, i.e.: “Coordinated promotional messages delivered through one or more channels such as print, radio, television, direct mail, and personal selling.”(<http://www.marsdd.com/mars-library/what-is-marketing-communication-marcom/>). Thus marketing communication can be considered as an important part of a company’s marketing effort to convey its message to a particular market segment.

Marketing communication is used mainly to create customer preferences, by providing relevant information for the buyers/ customers to buy a certain product or to be interested in it. It is agreed that this activity implies a long term effort to make something known; to have an impact on the market share. Consumers are extremely different from one another and in order for a product to be successful, these differences have to be identified and their needs have to be met. However we have to be aware of fact that there is also a need for a customer education in the early stages. Therefore when launching a new product or a new service, obviously you have to know a lot of things about the target audience. When launching a new product, one of the drawbacks that we have to surpass is to draw our target audience’s attention on our product in a society awashed with prints, TV programs, internet, etc. To surpass all these disadvantages several marketing communication media are used, all making up a communication mix. i.e.: personal selling, sales promotion, public relations (and publicity), direct marketing, trade fairs and exhibitions (<http://www.marketingteacher.com/introduction-to-marketing-communications/>).

- *Why there is a need for marketing communication to launch the 2014-2020 European Union programs for rural development in the Timis County?*

We need good specialists in marketing communication since the findings of the research made on the way in which the 2007- 2013 financing program identified serious deficiencies. Research (Constantin 2014b; Constantin and Petroman, 2012a; 2012,b) on the way in which communication was made on European funding did not encourage general public to find out more about this matter or even access European financing. We think that with this new financing period there are better chances to improve the standard of living of the people in rural areas. Our suggestions are made function to the findings of a research made from 2009 up to the present day. We are going to

analyse ways of improving communication regarding European funding for a target audience, i.e.: the owners of small holdings in the Timis county, who raise animals and cultivate small crops for personal use.

- *Key elements in marketing communication*

Out of the many elements that form the communication marketing we are going to focus mainly on a few main issues: objective(s), target people, strategy and means to be used. Launching of a new programme needs good advertising. According to Philip Kotler (1957) communication and promotion are among the most important marketing tools.

Objective. According to principles of communication marketing, the first thing we have to do is to establish our objective. Thus, our endeavor is directed towards the development of the rural areas in the Timis County by providing the necessary know-how needed to improve the living standards.

Target audience. Another important factor to consider is the target population. Our target audience is the owners of small holdings in the Timis County. We think that the inhabitants of the Timis people have, by now, some idea about European funding, and there are little chances to make them interested in the same programs after 7 years, if the same methods are used.

Channels used. There are opinions which sustain that modern informational technology limits the free access to information and can lead to an increase of the social inequity, due to the inequity in information. On the other hand, other opinions advocate that these new technologies miss the main point, i.e.: the main purpose is communication and not technology. Even if the abundance of information we have access to should have a beneficial effect on the society, much too often it is not the case. Firstly, because not all the people have access to the sources of information the urban people do. However, studies indicate that not even all the people living in urban areas do, but mainly those with higher education, relatively young and well paid (Constantin, 2014b).

To find out the most appropriate marketing communication strategy for the Financial Framework 2014 – 2020 period we used the data collected for the Financial Framework 2007 – 2013; the research focused on the way in which communication for the European funds for agriculture was made Constantin, 2014a, pp.160-164). We considered part of the study in which there were 100 respondents, which were grouped according to their place of residence, urban or rural.

For promoting the 2007-2013 EU programs, mainly media was used (Constantin and Petroman, 2012a). One of the questionnaires was administered to 100 people who were asked to mention the number of hours spent to read the written press or to listen to the radio (Figure 1). As it can be seen in Fig. 1(a) the majority of the Group A, representing the inhabitants of the rural areas, spends 1 hour or two hours per week to read the written press. We cannot say that the overall situation of Group B, the urban population, is much better.

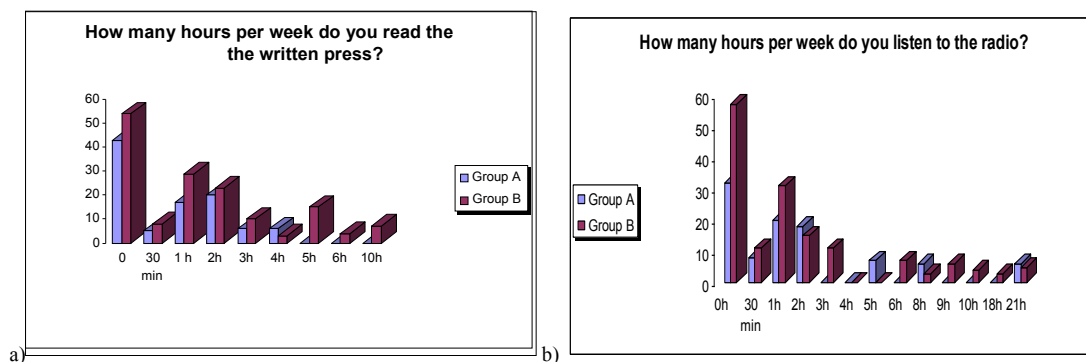


Fig. 1 (a) Number of hours allotted to read the written press (b) Number of hours allotted to listen to the radio

The surprising thing is the big percentage of the people in both groups that do not read at all the written press. However, the situation is a little bit better as far as the radio is concerned; there is an increase in the percentage of the people who listen to the radio for 1 or 2 hours in the rural areas. More than this, there is a significant percentage of the people who listen for 5 or 6 hours.

The situation is different as far as the TV programs are concerned, as the rural population watch at least 1h per week the TV programs, and most of them watch them for 2 or 7 hours per week (Fig. 2).

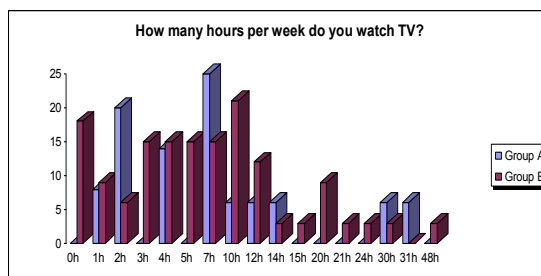


Fig.2. Number of hours allotted to watch TV programs

The conclusion that can be drawn is the following: to launch a new program for a target audience in the rural areas, a) the written press should be used in moderation, as the time allotted per week is insufficient to get the right information in any field irrespective of the subject, b) radio programs are a rather viable alternative and c) TV should not be ignored.

Another important factor to consider is the ability to select the socially indispensable information. We cannot overlook the individual ability to process the information. In our research, after establishing the best media channels to be used we wanted to find out what sources of information for news the subjects used. They had to choose from the following types of news: local community, county, i.e. Timis, regional, i.e. Banat, European Union, national, external.

The results indicate that for the local news they prefer the written press. However contradictory this may seem, the results are validated by the numbers of issues sold by the most widely read local newspaper, i.e.: “Renasterea Banateana”. This local paper has the largest circulation not only in Timis, but in the Banat region as well; it appears 6 times a week, has minimum 16pages, but it can reach 20 pages, out of this 8 pages are full colour. On Fridays it has two supplements: the TV program and various announcements free of charge and once a month a cultural supplement “Parallel 45” (<http://www.renasterea.ro/despre-noi.html>, para 3, our translation)

Even if they listen to the radio rather long, the rural population do not listen to the programs that present news; probably they listen more to different types of music. It is obvious that the majority of the respondents find out information from two main sources, i.e.: TV and internet. A study made in 2012 (Constantin, 2014b) confirmed that mass –media was the main source of information for the average people (Constantin and Petroman, 2012a). We can conclude that well placed advertisements on TV could help better inform the rural population of potential financial possibilities for rural development.

As for potential investors in the zootechnical field from the people living in towns we could use the following sources of information. Unlike the rural population the urban residents listen to news more on the radio, possibly while driving to work. Therefore we can use the radio to better inform them on the news that are of local, county, regional, EU, national interest.

We can also consider the ripple effect as many of the urban residents have holiday houses at the countryside or relatives living there, and information can also be sent like this. Also an important place is occupied by TV and the written press. As for the internet, we cannot control it very well as it is a matter of private decision in selecting the information.

These findings gave us general idea about the channels to be used and next we had to find out the subjects of most interest to the people living in the rural and urban residences. Therefore they were asked about the way in which they read several types of information in the papers. The question was meant to find out also the area of interest of the majority of the respondents. They had to choose from the following variants: leading articles, top events, politics, foreign affairs/ EU updates, social news, cultural events, documentaries, and sports news and only one of these answers was allowed: totally, partially, not at all, do not know/do not answer.

The respondents clearly indicate that the rural inhabitants do not favour politics, followed by leading articles, probably on any subjects and sports articles. However the percentage of those not interested in cultural events and documentaries is smaller. Social news and foreign/ EU affairs got the smallest percentages in the *not at all* category. However, the results gave us an insight on the attention paid by the respondents to the information sent in the

articles. Many read partially the following: leading articles, top events, the foreign/ EU affairs, cultural events and documentaries.

As far as the urban inhabitants are concerned they are definitely not interested in reading articles on politics followed by foreign/ EU affairs. They are interested in top events and sports. The percentage of those interested in the cultural events is comparable to that of the rural residents.

We can conclude that a combination of the events can be beneficial to remind the Timis inhabitants about the new Financial Framework 2014 – 2020 period. It is obvious that the use of mass media only will not be enough to convince people to want to know more about the EU policy on rural development.

The attempt to make the communication more efficient has to have as a starting point “the understanding of the communication situation and the development of the abilities to diagnose it” (Chiru, 2009, p 24; our translation). The research findings (Constantin, 2014a, pp. 160-164) indicated many of the respondents do not understand the vocabulary used in the TV news, and that they have difficulties in understanding the requirements for accessing EU funding.

Considering all these information, we recommend that people in charge be very careful at the way in which the program is introduced, as particular attention must be paid to the “customer’s profile”. Farmers should be explained the core benefits and the way in which these programs can help them to improve their lives. More attention should be paid to the way in which they live and to what they value, what their income is, etc. The program should be associated with what they know, as it is rather difficult to accept something that is intangible.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion we can say that the situation of the Romanian agriculture is rather different from the one of the other European Union member states since the percentage of the population involved in agriculture is the highest in the whole EU. The paradox is that Romania has the highest number of non-viable farms from an economic point of view, and the highest number of farms not connected to the market economy, as the small-subsistence or part-commercial family farms are predominant.

In Romania, for the 2007-2013 EU programs there was a lack of an integrated communication strategy which made difficult the correct understanding of the European policy. The methods used did not succeed to lower the lack of interest of the people and improve the information level of the ordinary people.

As far as the agricultural sector is concerned, the persons in charge of the European programs/ the ones taking the decisions do not see the problem from the point of view of the common European farmers and are not aware of the problems the ordinary people are confronting with. In our opinion a realistic policy might be obtained by a combination of their experiences.

To promote the program, authorities should make better use of the communication marketing as the previously used methods proved to be deficitary. To launch a new program for a target audience in the rural areas the written press should be used in moderation, as neither the time allotted per week to get the right information in any field irrespective of the subject, nor the number of people who read the written press is significant, radio programs are a rather viable alternative and TV should not be ignored, but neither be used as a primary source of information.

Acknowledgements

This paper was published under the frame of European Social Fund, Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2007-2013, project no. POSDRU/159/1.5/S/132765.

References

- Chiru, I.,(2009). Comunicare interpersonală, Editura Tritonic, Bucuresti, p 24.
- Constantin, E. C.,(2012).Getting the Young Generation’s Attention, *Procedia, Social and behaviour Sciences*, Volume 46, 2012, pp.4130-4135, *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences Journal* (Elsevier).
- Constantin, E.C.& Petroman, I.(2012a) Mass Media: The Main Source of Information on European Funding for the Average People, in *Management of sustainable rural development*, Series I, vol. XIV, Editura Agroprint,pp. 167- 174.
- Constantin, E.C.& Petroman, I, (2012b), *European Funds –The Edge Between Lack of Information and Lack of Interest in “Management of sustainable rural development”*, Series I, vol. XIV, Editura Agroprint, pp. 175- 182.

- Constantin, E.C. (2014a). The Need for Effective Communication *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 116, 21 February 2014, Pages 2010–2014, *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences Journal Elsevier*.
- Constantin, E.C. (2014b). Managementul comunicării în programe cu finanțare europeană, Editura de Vest.
- Luca, L., Ghinea, C. (n.d.) O țară și două agriculturi. România și reforma Politicii Agricole Comune a UE, released at http://www.crpe.ro/library/files/CRPE_Policy_Memo_no.4_RO.pdf, p.21.
- Martins, C., Spendlingwimmer, F. (2009). Eurostat, Statistics in focus ,Agriculture and fisheries, 80/2009, pp.1-8.
- Petroman, I. , (2007). Managementul sistemelor de creștere și exploatare a animalelor, Europastampa, Timisoara, pp. 15-20.
- Website of the Institutul National de Statistica, Romania:<http://www.insse.ro/cms/rw/pages/index.ro.do>.
- Introduction to Marketing Communications (n.d.) released at <http://www.marketingteacher.com/introduction-to-marketing-communications/>
- Marketing Communication (n .d.) released at <http://www.marsdd.com/mars-library/what-is-marketing-communication-marcom/>
- Renasterea Banteană (n.d) released at <http://www.renasterea.ro/despre-noi.html>
- Rural Development policy 2007-2013 Employment in rural areas, European Commission, Agriculture and Rural Development,(n.d), released at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/employment/index_en.htm
- Rural development 2014-2020, (n.d.) released at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020/index_en.htm